



Lambda Letters Project

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Intersex reality check

By David Cameron Strachan

When sexuality is discussed, I think that one's sex (the noun, not the verb) and one's gender need to be discussed *first*, since those are what define our sexuality. In my opinion, all religions need to educate their members by not avoiding these subjects and the uncomfortable feelings that may come up.

What is intersex? Many different people have their own definition. To me, intersex is an *umbrella term* for variations in sex anatomy, sex chromosomes, or mixed reproductive differences that have legal, social, and medical implications. Because many intersex people don't fit into a legal or social definition (within our society's "two sex, two gender" binary system), intersex children and adolescents are often surgically and hormonal "fixed" and "cured" of their ambiguity so they "fit visually" into the system.

Most people have the standard "male" or "female" sex anatomy appearance; intersex people are somewhere in between the two. Not all intersex persons are born with ambiguous genitalia. Some of our anatomical variations arrive at puberty, when we don't develop like others. It's

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Easy way to contact your legislators

By Boyce Hinman, *chief lobbyist*

Each month you receive paper letters to sign and return to us for delivery to your legislators. We are proud of how many of you actually do that each month. Typically 80-85% of our members do return signed letters to us each month. That has a great impact on our legislators.

However, there is another way you can contact your legislators and have an impact on the decisions they make. Each month we send e-mail alerts to people who have signed up to receive them. These alerts mirror what you get from us via the post office each month. However, the e-mail alerts often are about different bills than those covered in the newsletter and sample letters we mail you. Also the e-mail alerts help us keep you informed of fast-breaking legislative events in between newsletter mailings.

Creating the newsletter and sample letters is a long process. It takes time to compose the articles and sample letters, lay out the newsletter, and print them and mail them to you. It takes time for you to read

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Lambda Letters progress report

Letters collected

January, 2008 36,819 letters & e-mails
In all of 2007 289,789 letters & e-mails

Dollars spent

January, 2008 \$4,821
In all of 2007 \$60,689

Can you help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

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Lambda Letters Project

Our mission

To promote the social, economic, and human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals, couples, and families; people affected by HIV/AIDS; people of color; women; and people of low economic status. We urge elected officials to enact and support legislation that accomplishes this goal.

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Discrimination Complaints

Have you experienced employment discrimination because of your actual or perceived sexual orientation or because of your age (40 and over), ancestry, color, creed, disability, marital status, medical condition, national origin, race, religion, or sex?

Have you been denied family and medical care leave or pregnancy disability leave? If so, you may register a complaint with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing.

In cases of employment discrimination, call the department at (800) 884-1684.

In cases of housing discrimination, call (800) 233-3212.

The person answering the phone will schedule an appointment for you at the Department of Fair Employment and Housing Office which is closest to your home or place of employment.

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Keep diabetes from ravaging our communities

By Marty Martinez, legislative analyst

Diabetes is becoming one of the greatest health crises we face today. It is estimated that in California diabetes contributes to approximately 5,000 deaths and \$8 billion annually in direct and indirect health care costs. According to government statistics, by 2050 half of all Californians will have diabetes, and an even higher proportion of African Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans will have diabetes.

AB 1154 by Assemblymember Mark Leno (D-San Francisco) would create the Diabetes Risk Reduction Pilot Program. This first-of-its-kind bill would apply new approaches to combating diabetes and its predecessor, pre-diabetes, through integrative care and proactive prevention.

Integrative care is a new movement that is finding its way into the nation's hospitals, universities and medical schools. The philosophy of integrative care is a whole-person approach to medicine: treatment of the whole person, not just the disease.

Proactive prevention in diabetes risk mitigation is a public health concept that supports community health promotion of habits and practices that show evidence-based efficacy in at-risk populations. These programs include incentives for more whole foods, fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds along with adequate water and regular physical activity.

AB 1154 would require the Department of Public Health to develop the pilot program in counties throughout the state to review, analyze, and report on the outcomes from integrative care of diabetes causes through proactive prevention in the community. AB 1154 would utilize doctors, pharmacists, nutrition experts, fitness experts, and health counselors in an innovative approach to addressing the root causes of diabetes and pre-diabetes.

Communities of color have too much to lose to wait to address this epidemic. Please urge the Senate Health Committee to approve this bill. 

Support cancer screenings

By Alexandra Widmann, legislative analyst

Ovarian and uterine cancers pose high health risks to women. It is estimated by the American Cancer Society that close to 22,430 new cases of ovarian cancer were diagnosed in the US in 2007 alone. The number of uterine cancer cases is estimated at nearly double this figure. These numbers are alarming and indicate a significant, undeniable threat to women's health.

The best way to combat these two forms of cancer is through early and consistent screenings. Women who are diagnosed early have longer life expectancies, and 94% of women with ovarian cancer live up to five years or longer. Similar odds are expected for women diagnosed with uterine cancer in its early stages. Breast cancer is a familiar cause to many. As the leading form of cancer in women, it tends to generate more attention. However, it is critical that we not fail to safeguard against other cancer threats faced by women.

AB 1774, proposed by Assemblywoman Sally Lieber (D-Mountain View), demands additional protection for women's health by mandating that health care policy plans include free ovarian and uterine cancer screenings. This bill is similar to AB 1429, which was successfully adopted, mandating that insurance companies include coverage for the vaccination against human papillomavirus (HPV), a precursor to ovarian cancer.

This bill would allow women—without the means to cover the cost of testing on their own—to access screenings through their health insurance policies, assuring that they receive all the advantages of an early diagnosis.

It is important that insurance companies offer policy provisions that give Californians services that should be fundamental to everyone. Support women's health and send the signal that cancer testing should be a regular, valued part of a woman's health regimen, and that insurance companies have a duty to support this.

Please urge assemblymembers to support AB 1774 when it comes before them in the Assembly Health Committee. 

Respond to the governor's proposed budget

By Lorraine Rinker, legislative analyst

Things were looking up during last year's budget process when Governor Schwarzenegger approved increases for HIV/AIDS programs for California.

Today the tables have turned. In response to a \$14 billion state deficit, the governor's proposed 2008 budget includes an \$11 million cut in state funding of HIV/AIDS programs, indicating a reversal of fortune. Here is a breakdown of the cuts:

- \$7 million reduction to the AIDS Drug Assistance Program
- \$3.6 million cut for local HIV prevention and housing programs
- 10% reduction in Medi-Cal provider reimbursement rates

These budget cuts would mean:

- Removal of certain drug classes from the formulary, used to manage side effects and co-morbid conditions—hindering adherence to antiretroviral therapy and seriously undermining the health of ADAP clients
- Reduction in services for HIV education and prevention, counseling and testing, early intervention programs, and therapeutic monitoring
- Elimination of certain optional Medi-Cal benefits essential to half of HIV-positive Californians living with HIV/AIDS

The biggest concern voiced by many HIV/AIDS program advocates regards the impact these proposed cuts will have on low-income people who depend on public support for medications and medical care. Without access to such programs, many low-income individuals living with HIV will face new illnesses and have no choice but to go to hospital emergency rooms when they are ill.

Michael Weinstein, president of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation said, "California will ultimately pay more in health care costs in the long run if it adopts such ill-

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Equalize domestic partnership laws

By Shirin Buckman, legislative analyst

Please support SB 1066, which would broaden the definition of "domestic partner" to include all Californians over the age of 18 who choose to register as domestic partners. Currently only same-sex couples and heterosexual couples, where one is over the age of 62, are permitted to register as domestic partners. SB 1066 would remove the over-62 age restriction for heterosexual couples.

Why would people who are legally allowed to get married choose to be in a domestic partnership instead? Domestic partnerships provide fewer benefits than civil unions. The complications of dissolutions are similar in both situations if property and child custody are involved.

Data shows that heterosexual couples are increasingly choosing to live together without being married. The 2000 Census shows that 9.7 million unmarried heterosexual couples live together. Carole Migden (D-San Francisco) explains, "SB 1066 recognizes all committed couples, straight or same-sex, and respects their freedom to choose how to structure their families."

SB 1066 simply gives all people the option to choose how they want to be involved in their relationships. Some couples, regardless of sexual orientation, are adverse to the institution of marriage. They would prefer to have benefits without having to get married. AB 1066 would give all Californians the option of not participating in the institution of marriage.

Throughout the nation, couples increasingly opt for alternatives to marriage. More than half of couples in the US are living together and refraining from tying the knot for a variety of economic, philosophical, religious, and personal reasons. Many of these unmarried families resent being treated as if they were strangers. They want their family relationships recognized by employers and by the government.

While SB 1066 legalizes domestic partnerships for all, it is also important to continue the fight for marriage equality. That would give all Californians the choice of how they would like to participate in their relationships. When all people have the

Protect public university money

By Rebecca Chamow, legislative analyst

The University of California is widely recognized as one of the best public university systems in the country, and even the world. Over the past few years, however, the UC system's questionable executive compensation practices have worried and angered many throughout California. While the state is currently in the middle of a budget crisis and student's fees have hiked steadily for the past decade, it is especially important to ensure a sound process for dealing with the issues of executive compensation and contracts.

A recently introduced bill, AB 1821 by Assemblyman Portantino (D-Pasadena), addresses this issue by creating a clearer process for contract approval of UC executives. AB 1821 would require that all contracts for the hiring of an executive officer be adopted in a duly noticed meeting of the board. Additionally, the bill would redefine the parameters of separation pay for executives who end their employment with UC, so that the transition pay would not exceed the executive's regular compensation, and so that the executive would be paid only for actual duties performed.

The bill would also provide that, if the trustees decide to grant the executive with a professorship upon leaving, no compensation would be paid unless it is paid for actual teaching and does not exceed the amount that a full professor of the California State University would be paid for a similar teaching assignment.

We must take measures to ensure that no more public money is funneled into the pockets of retiring executives of the public university system. The changes laid out in this measure are a good start for this process. Write your assemblymember in favor of this important bill. 

right to marry, or register as domestic partners, we will have arrived at a time of true equality.

Please help us move towards that goal by supporting the right of all adults to register as domestic partners. Please write to the Senate Judiciary Committee in support of SB 1066. 

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timed AIDS cuts, and we urge the governor and legislature to quickly restore this public health funding. The governor should instead seek cost savings by reducing bureaucracy and eliminating the abundance of corporate and tax-avoidance loopholes in the state, rather than try to balance the budget on the backs of California's most vulnerable citizens." (AHF press release, 1/10/08.)

The good news is that HIV advocates are actively working with alliance partners and foundations across the state to encourage the governor and legislature to consider other budget choices as they address the state's current deficit. This momentum needs to continue with increased support.

Assemblyman John Laird (D-Santa Cruz), chair of the state assembly's budget committee, started the ball rolling soon after the governor's proposed budget announcement by presiding over a hearing on the proposed budget mid-January. At the same time, members of the California HIV Alliance, a group of seven AIDS agencies from across California, met to map out a strategy on how to beat back the cuts.

Laird's recently published report states, "While the governor took an 'across the board' approach, the plan now before the Assembly Budget Committee takes a more fine-tuned approach. Still, the solutions hit every area of the budget, but in many cases avoids the most negative impacts proposed by the governor. In health, the plan resulting from this fiscal emergency special session reduces Medi-Cal rates by 10% but puts off the cut until July 1 to enable this cut to be further evaluated, and perhaps restored in the regular budget process. And the plan does not include any of the governor's proposed cuts to optional Medi-Cal benefits." (Fiscal Emergency Special Session Subcommittee Report, 2/14/08)

Thousands of Californians depend on essential public services to manage their HIV. The governor and legislature must find alternative savings in the HIV/AIDS budget to avoid doing harm to the thousands of Californians living with HIV/AIDS. Assemblyman Laird and his committee associates are currently proposing solutions to ensure this doesn't happen. They need continuing support and encouragement to keep moving forward. Please sign the sample letter enclosed with this newsletter. 

March legislative update

Because of deadlines for submitting the following information to our newsletter, the status of some of the following bills may be outdated. To get the latest information, you can always visit our website at lambdaletters.org and click on Legislative Update. The status of bills on that list is updated daily.

With rare exceptions, February 22 was the last day on which bills could be introduced in the state legislature this year. So now the real legislative process begins.

All bills are reviewed in one or more committees of the legislature before they are voted on in the Assembly or Senate. All bills introduced in the Assembly (whose names begin with the letters "AB") must be reviewed and approved by an Assembly policy committee. For example, a bill regulating insurance companies in California would be reviewed and approved by the Assembly Insurance Committee.

Bills that would not cost significant money would then go to the floor of the Assembly for a final vote in that house. However, any bill likely to cost the state a significant amount must first go to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. That committee puts off the vote on any bills costing \$150,000 or more, until the deadline for approval by that committee.

Any bill that fails in a committee to which it has been sent dies without a vote on the floor of the Assembly. The same process applies to bills introduced in the Senate (whose names begin with the letters "SB").

Reading Study Participants Needed

UC Davis Adult Development Lab is currently searching for people aged 18-80 to participate in a study on reading comprehension.

The study consists of two 2-hour sessions scheduled one week apart.
English must be your native language.

The Lambda Letters Project is searching for participants who are willing to take part in the study and donate the \$40 stipend provided by UC Davis to help us achieve our mission.

Please contact Myeva Thierry at 916.444.8501 or e-mail Alp1234@aol.com to sign up and receive additional information.

If a bill makes it all the way through its first house, it is sent to the other house where the above committee process is repeated.

Here is a list of the bills we are tracking at this time.

HIV/AIDS issues

SB 1098 (Carole Migden, D-San Francisco)
Purpose: To state that medical marijuana dispensaries are legal under California law, and to relieve them of liability for sales taxes owed prior to October 2005.

Status: Referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support. In early years it was not clear that they should be charging sales taxes.

SJR 20 (Carole Migden, D-San Francisco)
Purpose: To urge the federal government to stop prosecuting medical marijuana dispensaries that are legal under California law.

Status: Referred to the Senate Health Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support.

Economic justice issues

AB 1 (John Laird, D-Santa Cruz)

Purpose: To improve children's access to health insurance and delete the citizenship and immigration status requirements to qualify for the Medi-Cal and Healthy Families programs.

Status: Approved by the legislature but held in the Assembly. Not sent to the governor. Author is still thinking about whether or not to send it to the governor.

LLP position: Support.

AB 2 (Merv Dymally, D-Compton)

Purpose: To continue a program that provides affordable health insurance to those who are otherwise uninsurable due to medical history.

Status: Placed in the Senate inactive file. Not approved by the legislature. Not sent to the governor.

LLP position: Support.

AB 100 (Gene Mullin, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: If approved by the voters, to authorize a bond issue of \$9.1 million for public grade schools, high schools, colleges, and universities to construct or improve educational facilities.

Status: Approved by the Assembly. Sent to the Senate. Not assigned to a committee yet.

LLP position: Support.

AB 121 (Bill Maze, R-Visalia)

Purpose: To allow employers to take credit for hiring people who were formerly in foster care.

Status: Died in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

LLP position: Support.

AB 173 (Merv Dymally, D-Compton)

Purpose: To require schools to develop better programs to reduce the school dropout rate.

Status: Failed in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

LLP position: Support.

AB 364 (Patty Berg, D-Eureka)

Purpose: To require hospitals, when they discharge patients, to tell patients what hospitalization care they need and resources for getting that care.

Status: Failed in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

LLP position: Support.

AB 1780 (Cathleen Galgiani, D-Stockton)

Purpose: The state is supposed to reimburse counties for public mental health programs. They failed to do so for several counties. This bill will put in place regulations to prevent that from happening again.

Status: Referred to the Assembly Health Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support.

AB 1821 (Anthony Portantino, D-La Canada Flintridge)

Purpose: To require a more open, visible process when decisions are being made on compensation of Cal State University executives.

Status: Referred to the Assembly Higher Education Committee for a vote on March 4.

LLP position: Support.

AJR 3 (Merv Dymally, D-Compton)

Purpose: To ask Congress and the president to increase funds for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program.

Status: Referred to the Assembly Utilities and Commerce Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support.

SB 32 (Darrell Steinberg, D-Sacramento)

Purpose: To allow all California children whose family income is under 300% of the federal poverty level to have access to the Medi-Cal and Healthy Families programs. It

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Legislative update

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would also eliminate the rules that deny coverage to some based on citizenship or immigration status.

Status: Placed in the Assembly inactive file.
LLP position: Support.

SB 42 (Tom Torlakson, D-Concord)

Purpose: To qualify for CalWORKs public assistance, people must be engaged in work activities, with certain exceptions, unless they are enrolled in an approved education program. This bill would also exempt them from work if they have applied for, but not yet been accepted by, an approved education program.

Status: Placed in the Assembly inactive file.
LLP position: Support.

SB 122 (Darrel Steinberg, D-Sacramento)

Purpose: To add attacks based on "homeless status" to the list of actual or perceived characteristics qualifying as a hate crime.

Status: Died in the Senate.
LLP position: Support.

SB 840 (Sheila Kuehl, D-Santa Monica)

Purpose: To establish a single-payer health insurance program (where the state collects funds from various sources and then pays all medical bills), which would provide affordable health insurance to every person in California.

Status: Awaiting a vote in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP position: Support.

SB 999 (Leland Yee, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To allow for the possibility of parole

if a person convicted of murder was under the age of 18 at the time of the murder.

Status: Died in the Senate.
LLP position: Support.

SB 1014 (Sheila Kuehl, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To provide various fees and taxes needed to cover the costs of the health care program proposed by SB 840.

Status: Died in the Senate.
LLP position: Support.

SB 1101 (Gil Cedillo, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To extend until January 2014 the time during which taxpayers could designate on their tax returns that a specified amount in excess of their tax liability be contributed to the Emergency Food Assistance Program Fund.

Status: Referred to the Senate Revenue and Tax Committee. No hearing date set yet.
LLP position: Support.

SB 1132 (Carole Migden, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To allow foster children who are on Medi-Cal to stay on Medi-Cal when they age out of foster care without having to reapply for Medi-Cal.

Status: Referred to the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs. **LLP position:** Support.

SCR 69 (Jeff Denham, R-Merced)

Purpose: To require that, in order to pass, all budget bills must get yes votes from two-thirds of the members of committees voting on the bills. **Status:** Introduced.
LLP position: Oppose.

LGBTI issues

AB 250 (Chuck DeVore, R-Irvine)

Purpose: To allow the owner of real property to complete a brief document transferring the property to another person upon the death of the owner. The property transferred would not have to go through the expensive, lengthy probate process.

Status: Now in the Senate Judiciary Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support. If passed, this law could help many same-sex couples.

AB 1498 (Chuck DeVore, R-Irvine)

Purpose: To exempt state contractors from the requirement that they not discriminate in the hiring or provision of benefits in an activity or program that is not part of a state funded program or activity.

Status: To be voted on in the Assembly Business and Professions Committee on January 15. Must be approved by the full Assembly by July 31 to survive.

LLP position: Oppose.

AB 1757 (Mary Hayashi, D-Castro Valley)

Purpose: To add the domestic partners of victims of a crime to a list of people allowed to testify at the parole hearing of a person who committed the crime.

Status: Referred to the Assembly Public Safety Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support.

SB 1066 (Carole Migden, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To allow heterosexuals to register as domestic partners regardless of their ages.

Status: Referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support.

SB 1113 (Carole Migden, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To allow property taxes, on property co-owned by two people, to not increase when one of the owners dies, as long as the part owned by the deceased co-owner is transferred to the surviving owner.

Status: Referred to the Senate Revenue and Tax Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support.

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People of color issues

AB 40 (Anthony Portantino, D-La Canada Flintridge)

Purpose: To allow people to take a tax credit for a contribution to an umbilical cord blood collection program.

Status: Died in the Assembly.

LLP position: Support.

AB 158 (Fiona Ma, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To allow people who have hepatitis B to qualify for Medi-Cal before they become disabled in hopes of preventing disability.

Status: Approved by the Assembly. Referred to the Senate Health Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support.

AB 337 (Mervyn Dymally, D-Compton)

Purpose: To equalize the penalties for the possession, transport, or sale of cocaine base or powder.

Status: Failed on the Assembly floor.

LLP position: Support. Currently the penalty connected with cocaine base is higher. Cocaine base is more commonly used by people on a limited income, while powder is more often used by wealthier addicts.

AB 512 (Sally Lieber, D-Mountain View)

Purpose: To require that when a businessperson negotiates specified loans or extensions of credit primarily in the languages of Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and Korean, that person must also provide summaries of the loan or credit documents in those languages.

Status: Held in the Senate Banking Committee. Not approved by the committee.

LLP position: Support.

AB 1081 (Martin Garrick, R-Carlsbad)

Purpose: To get employees of the California Department of Corrections involved in investigating the legal residency status of prison inmates.

Status: Died in the Assembly.

LLP position: Oppose.

AB 1154 (Mark Leno, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To require the state to develop a diabetes risk reduction pilot program within the minimum number of counties necessary to represent the demographic populations in the state to review, analyze, and report on the outcomes from integrative care of diabetes

through proactive prevention.

Status: Approved by the Assembly. Referred to the Senate Health Committee. No hearing date set yet. **LLP position:** Support.

AB 1758 (Chuck Devore, R-Irvine)

Purpose: To end the right of certain undocumented immigrants to in-state tuition at California's public colleges and universities.

Status: Referred to the Assembly Higher Education Committee for a vote on March 4.

LLP position: Oppose.

AJR 44 (Bob Huff, R-Diamond Bar)

Purpose: To urge Congress to amend the United States Constitution to deny US citizenship to individuals born in the United States to parents who are neither US citizens nor persons who own permanent allegiance to the United States.

Status: Introduced.

LLP position: Oppose.

SB 60 (Gil Cedillo, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To allow the state to issue driver's licenses to certain undocumented immigrants when approval of that action is approved by the federal government as allowed under the federal real ID act.

Status: Awaiting a final vote on the Assembly Floor.

LLP position: Support.

SB 160 (Gil Cedillo, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To allow certain undocumented immigrants to qualify for state scholarships.

Status: Died in the Senate.

LLP position: Support.

SB 1094 (Gil Cedillo, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To establish the Office of Immigrant Affairs whose job would be to ensure the integration and civic participation of new citizens in the state.

Status: Referred to the Senate Human Services Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support.

SB 1115 (Carole Migden, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To allow that race, religious creed, color, national origin, age, gender, marital status, sex, or genetic predisposition shall not be considered to be a cause or other factor considered in any determination of the amount of workers compensation benefit to award an injured worker.

Status: Referred to the Senate Labor

Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Watch. The purpose is a good one; we have concerns whether the bill's language accomplishes the purpose.

SJR 18 (Mark Wyland, R-Solana Beach)

Purpose: To require that all election ballots and ballot pamphlets be printed only in English.

Status: Referred to the Senate Elections Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Oppose.

Women's issues

AB 184 (Merv Dymally, D-Compton)

Purpose: To enact a Medi-Cal rate increase for family planning clinical office visits.

Status: Awaiting a final vote on the Senate floor. **LLP position:** Support.

AB 225 (Jim Beall, D-San Jose)

Purpose: To strengthen the laws against making repeated harassing phone calls.

Status: Approved by the Assembly. Referred to the Senate Public Safety Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support.

AB 268 (Charles Calderon, D-Montebello)

Purpose: To excuse people from testifying in court who attend the hearing but refuse to testify because of intimidation by one of the parties to the court case.

Status: Now in the Senate Judiciary Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support.

AB 499 (Sandre Swanson, D-Alameda)

Purpose: To create a pilot project to train county workers to assist children who have been sexually exploited, including those made to work as prostitutes.

Status: Approved by the Assembly. Referred to the Senate Public Safety Committee. No hearing date set yet. **LLP position:** Support.

AB 708 (Bob Huff, R-Diamond Bar)

Purpose: To require the state Department of Education to create abstinence-only sex education classes which state that the only acceptable sexual activity is within a monogamous married couple.

Status: Died in the Assembly Health Committee.

LLP position: Oppose.

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Legislative update

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AB 1275 (Mark DeSaulnier, D-Concord)

Purpose: To allow counties to increase fees for copies of marriage certificates, birth certificates, and death records for the purpose of funding governmental oversight and coordination of domestic violence prevention, early intervention, and prosecution efforts in the county—up to a maximum increase of \$4.

Status: Approved by the Assembly. Sent to the Senate Local Government Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support.

AB 1679 (Noreen Evans, D-Santa Rosa)

Purpose: To amend current law to allow attorney's fees to be included in support payments due to a child in a divorce or separation case.

Status: Approved by the Assembly. Referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee. Hearing cancelled by the author. No new hearing set yet. **LLP position:** Support.

AB 1771 (Fiona Ma, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To state that a prior conviction of domestic abuse is a good-cause basis for a judge to issue a current restraining order upon request. Provides an additional monetary penalty for those convicted of domestic violence, with that money going to domestic abuse prevention programs. Requires superior courts to release certain publicly available information in domestic abuse cases. Would also create a website listing people convicted of domestic abuse.

Status: Referred to the Assembly Public Safety Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support if the website list of offenders is removed from bill.

AB 1774 (Sally Lieber, D-Mountain View)

Purpose: To require health insurance plans to pay for annual ovarian and uterine cancer screening.

Status: Referred to the Assembly Health Committee. No hearing date set yet.

LLP position: Support.

AB 1822 (Jim Beall, D-San Jose)

Purpose: To state that a court shall deny any temporary or permanent award for spousal support to a party who has been convicted of a sexual offense in which the victim was a minor.

Status: Referred to the Assembly Judiciary Committee. No hearing set yet.

LLP position: Support.

LLP starts year with a bang

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Most of our January count came from e-mails sent to legislators by our supporters in response to e-mail alerts that we sent out. We sent 24 alerts. By the end of the month, people responding to our alerts had sent 33,900 e-mail messages to elected officials. You, our members, also sent paper letters to elected officials on five different bills.

Our success rate was good too. In our letters and e-mails we asked legislators either to support or oppose bills. They voted the right way 18 times and the wrong way four times. Votes on seven bills are still pending.

Our treasurer tells us the Lambda Letters Project spent \$2,987 in January. We delivered 36,819 letters and e-mails that month, *and our cost per letter or e-mail that month was just 81 cents*. You would be hard pressed to find any other civil rights and social justice organization that gives you more bang for the buck.

I hope that you will take the time to send us a generous contribution that will help us continue the important work that we and you are doing together. 

ACR 15 (Sally Lieber, D-Mountain View)

Purpose: To commemorate January 2007 as Cervical Cancer Awareness Month.

Status: Introduced. **LLP position:** Support.

AJR 42 (Bonnie Garcia, R-Cathedral City)

Purpose: The federal Violence Against Women Act, enacted in 1994, established a policy of allowing immigrants who are victims of domestic violence to seek permanent legal residence. The bill would urge Congress not to take that right away.

Status: Introduced. **LLP position:** Support.

SB 265 (Gloria Romero, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To state that the Division of Juvenile Justice shall explore options to provide programming for female offenders outside of division facilities. On or before January 1, 2009, the division shall transfer all female offenders out of division facilities.

Status: Placed in the Assembly inactive file.

LLP position: Support. 

You be the judge

By Boyce Hinman, chief lobbyist

A very odd thing happened in the assembly in January. The state assembly voted on whether or not to approve AB 337 by Assemblymember Merv Dymally (R-Compton), which would have equalized the penalties for the possession for sale of two different forms of cocaine. Crack cocaine is a less expensive form of the drug and is most often used by African Americans. Powder cocaine is more expensive and is most often used by whites.

The harm done by both forms of cocaine is the same. But the penalties for the possession for sale of crack cocaine are much harsher. Sentencing guidelines call for prison terms ranging from three to five years, compared with two to four years for powder cocaine. As a result, African Americans have consistently been given harsher sentences for what is essentially the same crime.

AB 337 would have equalized the penalties by setting the prison term for their possession at halfway between the prison terms currently applicable for either drug. The final vote was 37 to 33—four short of the number needed for passage.

But then the assembly voted to remove all record of the vote from the official records. Normally all votes are officially recorded. Normally the record shows how legislators voted on each bill. But not in this case.

No Republicans voted for the bill. Democrats voting against it included Juan Arambula (Fresno), Mike Feuer (Los Angeles), Lloyd Levine (Van Nuys), Ted Lieu (Torrance), and Lois Wolk (Davis). Five Democrats did not vote: Cathleen Galgiani (Stockton), Betty Karnette (Long Beach), Pedro Nava (Santa Barbara), Ira Ruskin (Redwood City), and Nell Soto (Pomona). All the other Democratic members voted for the bill.

After the vote on AB 337, a motion was made to remove the vote on the bill from the record. Apparently the Democrats who voted for AB 337 were afraid that Republicans would use their vote against them in the next election. The motion to remove the vote count on AB 337 passed by a vote of 46 to 28. I invite you to be the judge. Was removing the vote from the public record an appropriate thing to do? Does it serve the cause of transparency in government? 

Intersex reality check

Continued from page 1

estimated that one in 2,000 persons have some sexual birth ambiguity and 1 in 150 have other anatomical sex variations. An estimated 65,000 intersex people are born worldwide every year, and five surgeries are performed in the US each day on babies who look sexually different. Most cultures hide this "shameful" variation that their god created, although most surgeries happen in America.

There are many "condition-specific" groups that ignore the term intersex and are usually run by parents wanting their children to turn out *normal*. They tend to be transphobic and homophobic.

There is much debate about what to call us: hermaphrodites, eunuchs, hijras, female and male pseudo-hermaphrodites, disabled persons, persons with differences or variations of sex development, and "disorders or abnormalities that need fixing." For lack of a better word, I prefer intersex.

Socially, intersex people experience much shame and secrecy about their bodies, what happened surgically/hormonally to them as children or adolescents, and the trauma they received by the medical establishment, even if well intended. Many didn't find out until they were able to access their medical records about what happened to them. I'm hoping to encourage doctors to stop doing hormonal and surgical gender assignments unless that person (not the parent) can give full informed consent of how they prefer their own bodies to look.

I was born with XXY sex chromosomes, but it wasn't discovered until I was 29 when I was examined at an infertility clinic. It's estimated that one in 400 "male" births result with this variation (among others, such as XYY, XXYY, and XY/XXX). Many parents abort such fetuses when they find out they are not the *standard* XX or XY person.

My anatomical variation is called Klinefelter's syndrome and my almost nonexistent sex glands produce 10% of what is considered "normal" testosterone production. I do not produce sperm.

This reality has a major spiritual significance for me because so much of society is surrounded by family. I can't reproduce, and I often wonder why God made me this way? Many intersex people cannot reproduce; where is the religious support when we are called to go be fruitful and multiply?

Many intersex persons are heterosexually identified. Others are gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Many of us have gender identities other than the standard man = male, woman = female and are intergendered, bigendered, both and neither man nor woman. And there are those who identify in the "traditional" binary terms. How can religion serve these populations?

Then there's the question about identity. Can there be an intersex identity? I think so. I identify as intersex although I pass as a masculine man, thanks to 30 years of testosterone replacement therapy and all the side-effects that I've had to endure. I was never given an "informed" choice for this to happen. The first puberty I went through between 13 and 15 was fine with me. The second in my 30s was disturbing because of all the changes my anatomy and psyche went through—just so that medical society could call me "normal."

Since the intersex movement is still young (not quite 15 years old), it is my hope that younger intersex persons will be proud of who they are and be able to live with the sexual anatomies they were born into.

See the Intersex link under Community Voices on the Marriage Equality USA website, marriageequality.org, for more information. 

Easy way to contact legislators

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them, sign them, and return them to us for delivery to your legislators. As a result, the newsletter you get in the mail must be about votes expected to occur several weeks after we start the process of creating the newsletter and sample letters.

Often we hear about a vote that will occur on an important bill in the coming week. In that case, there is simply no time to get letters to you via the post office. However, our e-mail alert system allows us to get that information to people the day we hear of the vote. People can then use our easy automated system to send messages to their legislators that same day or the next day. That allows us to get large volumes of mail to legislators well before the vote.

Each e-mail alert we send provides background on the bill and why it is important to support or oppose it. Each alert also contains a sample letter. The alert even has a link to a copy of the bill so you can determine whether you agree with our position on it. And each alert contains links that make it easy to send messages to your legislators. Most people tell us it takes about five minutes to respond to each alert and send messages to their legislators.

We invite you to sign up for our e-mail alerts. It's easy to do. Just go to our website at lambdaletters.org and look for the "Get our e-mail alerts" box in the left navigation area. Type in your e-mail address and then click Send. We will then start sending our alerts to you.

I hope you will make use of this easy way to increase your influence over the legislation that affects your life. 



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